

# CATTLE RAIDING

## A FREE HELLFROST RESOURCE



GMs should note that while many *Hellfrost* campaigns will focus on monster hunting and epic deeds, the game can also be run around a single community, perhaps with the heroes as members of the same extended family—“dungeon bashes” aren’t the only way to play the game.

This download presents a very simple system for conducting cattle raids. GMs who want a more in-depth cattle raid can simply expand each step into part of a longer adventure, with added complications.

## CATTLE RAIDING RULES

While adventurers tend to measure their wealth in terms of coin and gear, communities, especially Saxa ones, place a greater emphasis on the size of their cattle herds. Cows aren’t just worth actual coin at the market, but also provide meat (through their calves), hides, manure for the crops, and milk.

Naturally, with cows being valuable assets they are prone to be stolen. Sometimes goblins, orcs, and bandits (and passing engros) are responsible, but just as often the perpetrators are neighboring families and clans. Unless a raid results in bloodshed, it rarely sours local relations much, as retaliatory raids will be launched.

Cattle raiding is not considered theft by the Saxa (Finnar have reindeer raids to similar effect), so long as the basic laws are followed. First, only a noble can instigate a legal cattle raid. Anyone else who sanctions a raid is just a bandit. Second, a raid is not a battle—any injuries inflicted on either party by another participant, raider or defender, are subject to wergild claims.

Cattle raids are never conducted for personal wealth. At best, the leader of the band can expect to keep only a small number of the captured cattle. The majority belong to the noble, who typically keeps a large portion for his own herd and divides the rest among his peasant families.

## 1) SEEKING PERMISSION

While cattle raiding is a daily part of Saxa life, only nobles (or whoever rules an independent settlement) have the legal right to instigate them. The first step in conducting a raid is to get permission from the landowner whose peasants you wish to recruit into the raiding party.

This step utilizes the Kinship & Fealty rules found in the free download, **Family**. Note that although these rules are optional in *Hellfrost*, this is one instance where they really do fit the feel of the game. The rules determine not only if permission is given, but also the maximum number of volunteers. Exactly how many raiders the characters take with them is their choice, not the noble’s. After all, they are the ones who will be leading the raid.

Heroes who lead a cattle raid without permission are branded as bandits and thus subject to the full weight of the law if identified and captured.

Noble player characters have the authority to approve cattle raids, but they must do so from their own lands. That is, an adventuring party short on supplies cannot simply steal cattle and claim legal precedent.

## POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- An important person (a priest, rival noble, senior farmer) opposes the raid for some reason (–2 to Persuasion rolls).
- The omens are poor (–4 to Persuasion rolls).
- Bad weather is forecast (–1 to Persuasion rolls).
- A warrior demand to be made raid leader. If the Persuasion roll fails by one or two points, the raid is authorized but an NPC is in charge.

## 2) CROSSING THE BORDER

Most farming communities, whether a lone stead or a town, post mounted sentries equipped with signal horns

on their borders. The sentries are tasked with watching not only for cattle raiders, but for more dangerous foes such as orcs and giants. This phase also accounts for locating a herd of cattle and scouting the terrain for the best cover from which to launch the attack and the easiest escape route.

The raiders must make a Cooperative roll to sneak across the border. Each Wild Card has the choice of whether he uses Knowledge (appropriate Area), Notice, or Stealth.

Raiders with direct access to any of the following spells may use their arcane skill in the Cooperative roll: *boost (Stealth)*, *farsight*, *fly*, *fog cloud* (only if cast with *altered senses*), *invisibility*, *obscure* (only if cast with *altered senses*), *silence*, and *speed*. Other spells are permissible at the GM's discretion.

The leader and his comrades don't have to use the same skills. The die roll represents several hours of travel and planning. Thus, while the leader may use his Notice to avoid sentries, a friend could employ Stealth, telling him when to duck into vegetation to avoid breaking the skyline.

However, every player character in the party must make some sort of die roll, even if the maximum +4 bonus has already been achieved.

Any Extras in the party who live locally make a Group Common Knowledge roll to provide Cooperation. Otherwise, they *must* make Stealth rolls.

**Modifiers:** Party size is important—a small band of skilled raiders is far more likely to escape detection than a veritable army of farmers, although a larger force allows more cattle to be stolen.

For every five whole members in the raiding party, a -1 penalty is applied to the final result.

**Results:** See the next phase for how this helps the party.

## POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Mounted warriors are patrolling the border (-4 overall penalty).
- Bad weather (-2 to overall result).
- A hunting party or a fey friendly to the defenders reports the raiders' presence (Heroes receive one or two less tokens in the next phase).
- The heroes are attacked by rival raiders. These might be monsters (goblins, orcs, a giant, wolf pack) or from the civilized races. Alternately, a large beast might be in their path.

## 3) STEALING CATTLE

Cattle are typically guarded by herders and the young boys of the settlement. They carry spears to fend off wolves, but they are not warriors, nor are they expected to mount any form of armed resistance. Their typical response on seeing a raiding force is to run for their lives, screaming blue murder in order to alert the actual warriors, who will be in the settlement. The raiders have

to act quickly in order to round up the cattle and make their escape.

The actual cattle raid is handled using a variant of the Mass Battles rules.

## STEP ONE: SETUP

Unlike a regular Mass Battle, no side automatically begins with 10 tokens.

The raiders receive two tokens for each whole five members, with no maximum.

The size of the herd is determined by a random roll, modified by the result of the previous phase. The GM rolls a d6, and modifiers it based on the result of the roll to sneak into the rival clan's holdings. Each success and raise grants a +1 bonus, to a maximum of d4. A failure gives a -2 penalty and a critical failure a -4 penalty. He then consults the table below.

d6	Herd Size	Battle Skill
1 or less	4	d12+2
2-3	5	d12+1
4-5	6	d12
6-7	7	d10
8	8	d8
9	9	d6
10+	10	d4

**Herd Size:** Represents the number of tokens the herd has. The exact number of cattle is irrelevant.

**Battle Skill:** The herd doesn't have any actual skill in waging warfare. Rather, it is an indication of how difficult it is to catch cows. A large herd has more members, and thus it is easier to grab one. A smaller herd quickly disperses, making the raiders' task much harder.

## STEP TWO: MODIFIERS

The standard modifiers for Tokens and Terrain apply. Increase the Terrain penalty by a further point if there is snow on the ground. Unless the heroes intend on butchering the cattle, in which case this really isn't a cattle raid, Artillery is of no use.

## CHARACTERS IN MASS BATTLES

Unlike a regular battle, Fighting, Shooting, and Throwing aren't much use when trying to round up startled cattle.

Instead, heroes must use one of the following (their choice): Agility (herding the cattle), Smarts (herding the cattle with clever tactics or knowledge of herding techniques), Strength (wrestling cattle), or Vigor (for overall endurance).

Raiders with direct access to any of the following spells may use their arcane skill: *barrier*, *beast friend*, *entangle*, *farsight*, *fly*, *speed*, and *summon beast*. Other spells are permissible only at the GM's discretion and must be directly useful in *catching* cows.

The difference in tokens works as normal. The +1 bonus for each Rank above Novice also works as standard.

The outcome of the roll works exactly as the Mass Battle rules—cows are quite capable of trampling the heroes underfoot, and there may be a bull in the herd as well! Just remember to change the descriptions appropriately.

## STEP THREE: BATTLE ROLLS

The leader of the raid may not be waging war, but he still needs to know how to effectively command his raiders. As such, the regular system of opposed Battle rolls is made. However, the results of the opposed roll don't indicate casualties.

Each token the cows lose represents captured cattle. Perversely, this lowers the size of the herd, making it harder to capture more cattle. Adjust the herd's Battle skill on the next round based on the number of tokens the herd has left.

Each token the characters lose represents fatigued raiders *and* the passage of time—the arrival of reinforcements ends the cattle raid, as no one wants to get involved in bloodshed.

Each herd token equates to approximately four cows (quality varies).

## STEP FOUR: MORALE ROLLS

The herd has no Spirit die, and thus never makes Morale rolls. However, the raiders must make rolls as normal.

Failure means either the raiders are too exhausted to continue the chase or enemy reinforcements are approaching. Either way, the raid is called off.

Make one more Battle roll and then end the raid. On a result of 1 or less, the raiders flee immediately with whatever cows they have captured.

## POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Berserks number among the defenders approaching the raiders or the herd has been moved nearer the settlement (–1 to Spirit rolls).
- The herd has been split (the herd has fewer tokens).
- A mean bull is present (the heroes have –1 to their Characters in Mass Battle rolls).
- Bad weather makes it hard to find the cows (apply a penalty to the raider's Battle rolls).

## 4) ESCAPE

Whether the raiders manage to capture any cattle or not, it's now time to flee before the settlement's warriors arrive and the raid devolves into a bloody brawl.

Running away isn't about tactics or stealth—it's about pure speed. As such, the party makes a Cooperative roll based on their running die type. Extras make a Group

Cooperative roll based on their running die (typically d6).

Heroes with access to the following spells may make an arcane skill roll instead: *beast friend*, *fog cloud*, *obscure*, and *speed*.

**Modifiers:** A penalty of –1 for every cow token captured is applied to the over result. Allowing *beast friend* to be used represents commanding the herd leader, whom the other cows follow without question.

**Results:** Consult the table below.

Result	Event
Critical Failure	The raiders are overrun by defenders or lose control of the cattle. They lose 1d6 tokens.
Failure	The raiders are forced to abandon slower cattle. They lose 1d4 tokens.
Success	The party makes it back to their lands, but loses 1d2 tokens.
Raise	The raiders return with all their stolen cows!

## POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- The chasers have *speed* potions (–4 to overall roll).
- Bandits, warriors from the raided clan, or a monster intercept the fleeing raiders (cue a tabletop battle scene).
- A mischievous faerie tries to lead the cattle away (–2 to overall roll).
- A faerie demands a gift for the heroes to flee across his lands (pay 1 token of cows or suffer –4 to overall roll due to a lengthy detour).

## 5) REWARDS

By the ancient laws, the noble who sponsored the raid (that is, he granted permission) owns all the cows captured. Generosity is a prized trait among the civilized races, however, and it is an ill-fated noble who does not reward his raiders and peasants.

Typically, whoever led the raid is granted the equivalent of one cow (200 gold sciends) in coin. How he divides this among his comrades is left to him.

Of the actual cows, one is used to hold a feast in honor of the raiders and to honor Bolverk, patron deity of cattle raiders (see below), the noble keeps half the remaining plunder, and then divides the rest among the herding families.

Taking part in a successful cattle raid (at least one token of cattle returned safely) earns the leader 2 Glory and all the helps 1 Glory.

## POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- The noble fails to reward the heroes for their efforts.
- Circumstances have changed while the party has been away, and they are ordered to return the cows.

- A visiting higher-ranked noble demands half the cows as tribute.
- One of the defending farmers claims he was attacked and later demands wergild from the raiders' leader.
- One of the cattle belongs to a powerful faerie, who demands it be returned with interest.

## BOLVERK

**Titles:** The Raider, Wealth-Bringer, The Celestial Bull, Herd Leader

**Aspects:** Cattle raiding.

**Symbol:** A bull's head.

**Priesthood:** Herders (priests); Bulls (paladins).

**Herald:** None.

**Holy Days:** None. Ceremonies are held before and after a cattle raid.

**Duties:** To lead and participate in cattle raids, to increase the herd of one's clan.

**Sins:** (Minor) Failing to take part in a cattle raid once a year, harming a defender on a cattle raid, killing a cow for any reason; (Major) Taking part in an unauthorized cattle raid, having a cow you own stolen by raiders or monsters; (Mortal) Failure to steal a single cow on a cattle raid you personally lead.

**Signature Power:** *beast friend* (cattle only).

**Powers:** *barrier, entangle, farsight, invisibility, speed, summon beast* (cattle only).

**Trappings:** Any, except necromantic. Most clerics prefer natural trappings as opposed to showy effects.

**Disciple Edge:** Lesser deities do not grant followers a Disciple Edge.

**Special:** Clerics of Bolverk do not gain a free Connections Edge, but neither do they have the Orders Hindrance. In most communities, the cleric is an advisor to the chief, and likely works as a farmer when not on official business.

Bolverk is the son of Ullr, god of hunting. Unlike his father, Bolverk has no interest in harming animals, not even to provide sustenance. Much to his grandmother Eostre's delight, he is the patron of cattle raids. He is always depicted as a muscular man, sometimes armed with a lasso. He is often portrayed with a bull's head, though there is no standard convention on his exact appearance. Similarly, some statues show him accompanied by a dog, known in myths as "Heel-nipper."

There are no temples to Bolverk in Rassilon. Shrines, on the other hands, are common among clans who favor cattle raiding as a means of increasing wealth. Since raids are authorized by the local noble, the shrines are universally housed in his great hall. Many bandits, who survive by raiding herds, erect temporary shrines in their camps. Most shrines comprise a bull's skull draped with untreated cow hide.

Bolverk's clergy are very similar in their roles, as both are expected to take part in raids at least once a year. Traditionally, priests favor tactics and cunning spell use to

catch cattle, while the paladins refer to wrestle the cows to the ground. Priests sometimes bless raiding parties without taking part, whereas paladins always try to be the raid leader. In the event of defenders intercepting the raiders, both types of clergy are prepared to run rather than fight. This is not to say they are cowardly; Bolverk simply wishes no bloodshed during a cattle raid.

In addition to stealing cattle, many clerics hire their services to settlements as herd guardians. Their spells may be better suited to theft, but a *barrier* or *entangle* spell is very effective as thwarting thieves, and *summon beast* can be used to return lost animals to the herd. While they have skills suitable for other types of raids, clerics rarely participate in such activities.

The clergy have just two ceremonies. The first is held before any raid. Those taking part in the raid wear horned headdresses and leather hides, while the local priest or paladin (it is a rare community that has more than one of Bolverk's clergy) dresses as a bull. He summons the herd to his side with horns and deep, lowing prayers. Traditionally the ceremony takes place outside, with the "cows" and "bull" moving through the settlement. Children, who are not permitted to take part in cattle raids, may join the ceremony. They dress up as calves and follow the "cows."

Occasionally, a character in a wolfskin attacks the herd. The "bull" then drives him away in an act which represents Bolverk's strength as the celestial bull and honors his grandmother, Eostre, the protector of animals.

After a successful raid, one cow is singled out for sacrifice. This is normally the healthiest animal. Choosing the sickliest has been known to backfire, with cattle in the settlement's herd failing to produce milk or sickening. The sacrifices flesh is eaten by the raiders and the local community, while its spirit is said to depart to Bolverk's personal herd. If the raid fails, the community is still expected to honor Bolverk by sacrificing one of its own cows.

**Roleplaying Guidelines:** Bolverk's clergy tend to be strong and fit; chasing after cows is strenuous work. Most are also quite intelligent.

Notice and Stealth are favored skills, as they allow the raider to spot and sneak up on herds. Similarly, those who want to actually lead a herd need to know how to command men. Hence, Knowledge (Battle) is an important skill. (Aside from generally being short on combat skills, Bolverk's clergy have all the abilities a good guerrilla commander requires.)

Fleet-Footed is a favored Edge, as running away is an important part of any cattle raid.